

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 26, 2004

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ike Skelton
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Hunter and Ranking Member Skelton:

We are writing to urge the House Armed Services Committee to hold hearings on the effectiveness of United States efforts to search for and secure Iraq's weapons materials and technologies. We are troubled by a report released on October 25th by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) concluding that nearly 380 tons of conventional weapons known to have been stored at the Al Qaqaa military facility in Iraq are unaccounted for.

In a speech at the National Defense University on February 11 2004, President Bush stated that the gravest threat to our national security is a weapon of mass destruction in the hands of a terrorist organization. We agree and have spear-headed efforts in Congress to secure loose nuclear material. We were therefore deeply concerned to learn that the Administration failed to protect the Al Qaqaa and other weapons sites prior to the invasion of Iraq, despite offers from the IAEA to assist in the monitoring and verification of the munitions at these facilities. Last April, the IAEA reported suspicious activity at sites of concern: "there has been extensive removal of equipment, and, in some instances, removal of entire buildings." Furthermore, "large quantities of scrap, some of if contaminated, have been transferred out of Iraq." The IAEA expressed concern that it is difficult to evaluate whether or not the removal of material is the result of looting or of insurgents' efforts to relocate weapons facilities elsewhere.

We are equally troubled by statements made by the Department of State that the Iraqi interim government, not the United States, is responsible for securing Iraq's weapons materials. These concerns are compounded by a March 1, 2003 letter from Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard B. Myers regarding the safeguarding of nuclear sites in Iraq prior to the invasion, which states: "Regrettably, the size of the areas and breadth and depth of requirements precluded immediate seizure and security of all facilities."

It is alarming that our efforts to control weapons material in Iraq were and continue to be insufficient at a time when the United States should be leading global efforts to contain the spread of weapons of mass destruction. As members of the House Armed Services Committee, we believe it is critical that this committee exercise its oversight role of the

progress made in securing weapons in Iraq. Specifically, hearing could help illuminate the following critical questions:

1. Why did the Administration fail to secure the nearly 380 tons of explosives in Iraq, despite warnings from the IAEA?
2. Did inadequate troop levels in Iraq contribute to the failure to secure al Al Qaqaa?
3. What action did Coalition Provisional Authority Administrator L. Paul Bremer III take after reportedly being warned in May 2004 that the explosives had gone missing?
4. When did the civilian leadership at the Pentagon, including Secretary Rumsfeld, become aware of the missing explosives? And what actions have been taken since the Administration became aware that the explosives were unaccounted for?
5. Are there other sites in Iraq with dangerous material that have been looted? Does the Administration have an estimate for the total amount of munitions, weapons and explosives that are unaccounted for in Iraq?

We hope that you will honor our request to hold hearings into this important matter. Our national security depends on it. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Marty Meehan
Member,
House Armed Services Committee



Ellen O. Tauscher
Member,
House Armed Services Committee